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SUBJECT: SOUTHEAST TURKEY PRESS SUMMARY FOR DECEMBER 28, 2004

This is the Southeastern Turkey press summary for December 28, 2004. Please note that Turkish press reports often contain errors or exaggerations; AmConsulate Adana does not vouch for the accuracy of the reports summarized here.

POLITICAL, SECURITY, HUMAN RIGHTS

MILLIYET / SABAH / OZGUR GUNDEM: 120 villagers had to migrate from their towns due to the alleged oppressive attitude of Zeki Mujde, the Agha of eight villages in Ercis, Van, (Note. Agha is a rural landlord in Southeastern Turkey. End Note.) To investigate the issue, the Ercis Prosecutor launched a judicial process. It is claimed that the Agha (allegedly) forced the villagers to migrate from the town because the villagers voted for another candidate in the local elections on March 28, 2004 (that designates the administrative authority of a village.) Niyazi Tanilir, the Governor of Van, called the villagers back to their towns and said that Zeki Mujde will cover all the costs of the villagers if they return

MILLI GAZETE / TERCUMAN / CUMHURIYET / OZGUR GUNDEM / MILLIYET / ZAMAN / YENI SAFAK / EVRENSEL: The legal proceedings have been started against villagers who threw stones and eggs to U.S. experts that came to take the Tomahawk cruise missiles that crashed in the field of a small village of Sanliurfa on March 2003. End Note.). The litigation is brought against 13 villagers on the grounds that they damaged public property and they could face up to 3 years of imprisonment. (Note. Villagers broke several windows of the four vehicles carrying the experts. End Note.) Mustafa Karakus, the administrative authority of the village, said, "How come a public lawsuit can be brought against us! It is us that should bring a lawsuit against the U.S.A that dropped cruise missiles on our land. If that missile hit us instead of the empty land, the whole village would be gone forever. We will decide at the end of this legal proceeding whether to bring a lawsuit against the U.S.A or not."

OZGUR GUNDEM / EVRENSEL: Ten years ago, the response of Human Rights Commission of the Turkish Assembly to an application of one of the relatives of seven people that disappeared in Mirik in the province of Tunceli was that seven villagers might have been brought away by the illegal organization (note: official reference to PKK/Kongra Gel. End note.) since the seven people had not been involved in the conflicts between eighteen terrorists and the security forces, during the military operation conducted on September 21-2, 1994. The Human Rights Commission of the Turkish Assembly further stated that the district, where it was known that 8 people lived, was found empty during the operation, but for the sheep grazing on the empty land.

CUMHURIYET / OZGUR GUNDEM: The Human Rights Association demanded that the people accountable for the mass graves in Kulp, Diyarbakir, where the dead bodies of 11 villagers were found, be found and an investigation be brought against the Bolu Commando Brigade that conducted the operations in the region then. (Note. allegedly in 1994. End Note.). It is (allegedly) found out that Bolu Commando Brigade is also accountable for the killing of 14 people during operations conducted at Zengok and Altinova townships in Mus province and the disappearance of 2 people in Lice, Diyarbakir.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS

1. BOLGE / TURKIYE / EKSPRES / VAKIT / MILLI GAZETE: As compared to the figures of the previous year, the exports from Turkey to the Middle East countries are breaking the records and the volume of exports has increased by 40.9 percent. Mehmet Hadra, President of the Turkish-Arab Businessmen Association, said that it is pleasing that Arab businessmen prefer to import from Turkey in the first place. Hadra pointed out that the efforts of the Government (of Turkey) played a substantial role in establishing the amicable trade relationships with Syria, especially on the issue of a free trade zone agreement.

2. EKSPRES / BOLGE: Fethi Coskuntuncel, President of the Adana Chamber of Commerce claimed that expanding the scope of incentive with the introduction of the new Incentive Law would negatively affect Adana's economy. Whereas the current incentive law allowed the granting of subsidy to cities whose per capita income is less than 1500 USD, the new law also grants subsidy to cities whose per capita income is 2000 USD. According to Coskuntuncel, if the new Law takes effect, Adana will fall

behind in the competition with the markets of Hatay, Kahramanmaraş, and Gaziantep, the cities that will also be eligible for the incentive.

13. HURRIYET (CUKUROVA): The businessmen who accompanied President Erdogan on his visit to Syria brought back three beneficial outcomes for the economy of Gaziantep. The first one is the Free Trade Zone Agreement signed by the both countries. The second one is that Syria is going to open a Consulate in Gaziantep in the first quarter of 2005. Lastly, Gaziantep will be included within the scope of the Incentive Law.

14. HURRIYET (CUKUROVA): Sunay Demircan, General Coordinator of the EU Program in Turkey for Promoting Non-Governmental Organizations, held a seminar called "EU Projects: A General Overview and Basic Principles". The seminar provided information to managers of NGOs in Adana on how to benefit from the funds that EU makes available for the projects of NGOs.

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